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REPORT BY THE U.S.

General Accounting Office

Alternatives To Current Draft Registration Program Needed Unless Level Of Compliance Improves

Young men are required to register for the draft within 30 days of their 18th birthday. GAO found the rate of registration compliance has substantially deteriorated--from 93 percent in 1980, when there was a 2-week registration period, to 70 percent for the first 9 months of the 1981 continuous draft registration program. The Selective Service System's records, however, were just as accurate.

A surge of late registrations resulted from the President's January 1982 decision to continue draft registration and from the media campaign that followed concerning possible prosecution of nonregistrants. GAO believes that, unless this higher rate of registration is sustained during 1982, alternatives will have to be developed.



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UNITED STATES GENERAL ACCOUNTING OFFICE

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20548

FEDERAL PERSONNEL AND
COMPENSATION DIVISION

B-201499

The Honorable Jake Garn
Chairman, Subcommittee on HUD
and Independent Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate

The Honorable Roger W. Jepsen
Chairman, Subcommittee on
Manpower and Personnel
Committee on Armed Services
United States Senate

The Honorable Edward P. Boland
Chairman, Subcommittee on HUD
and Independent Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
House of Representatives

The Honorable William Nichols
Chairman, Subcommittee on Military
Personnel and Compensation
Committee on Armed Services
House of Representatives

Now that the President has decided to continue draft registration, the completeness and accuracy of the Selective Service System draft registration will be a subject of increased public debate and challenge. Therefore, we have evaluated the 1981 continuous registration program in contrast to the time-limited period of registration, as conducted during 1980. Because of the responsibilities of your Subcommittees concerning the Selective Service System, we believe our findings will be of interest to you.

Registration of young men with the Selective Service System was resumed in 1980 after a 5-year suspension. Peacetime draft registration of young men born in 1960 and 1961 was conducted in a 2-week period in July 1980, and a subsequent registration of those born in 1962 was carried out in a 1-week period in January

1981. Since then, the Selective Service has conducted continuous registration whereby young men are required to register at the post office within 30 days of the date they reach 18 years of age. Nonregistration is a felony punishable by up to 5 years' imprisonment, a \$10,000 fine, or both.

OBJECTIVE, SCOPE, AND METHODOLOGY

Our objective was to determine if the 1981 continuous registration of young men born in 1963 is as accurate and complete as the 1980 registration. We have previously reported that the July 1980 registration was complete and accurate ("Evaluation of the Recent Draft Registration," FPCD-81-30, Dec. 19, 1980). A copy of that report is included as appendix III.

For 1981 results, we worked at the Selective Service System headquarters in Washington, D.C. We made our review in accordance with our "Standards for Audit of Governmental Organizations, Programs, Activities, and Functions." We reviewed the system designed to conduct the registration and tested its procedures through statistical sampling of 503 completed registration cards and data on them. We obtained computer printouts of the data on these cards from Selective Service computer tapes. We then contacted, by telephone, 347 of the sampled registrants and compared our results with data on System files.

To determine the completeness of the registration, we reviewed the Service's reports of registration and tested their accuracy by randomly selecting blocks of registration cards, counting them, and comparing our count against their records. We also assessed the accuracy of the Service's estimate of the registrant population size. The statistical testing and methodology we used is described in appendix II.

DRAFT REGISTRATION CONTINUES TO BE
ACCURATE BUT COMPLETENESS HAS
DETERIORATED

Although over 6.6 million young men have registered for the draft since its resumption, increasing numbers are failing to register. About 450,000 young men born between January 1 and October 1, 1963, or 30 percent, have failed to register. Only about 1.06 million, or 70 percent, of the 1.51 million young men who should have registered (those turning 18 during the first 9 months of 1981) had done so and were recorded on the Selective Service's master computer files as of December 20, 1981. ^{1/} (The Selective Service has publicly announced a registration compliance

^{1/}Young men are required to register within 30 days of their 18th birthday. The cited totals allow for this period.

rate of 77 percent. For an explanation of the difference between Selective Service's estimate and our estimate, see app. I, p. 2 of this report.)

In contrast, the compliance rate, as of December 20, 1981 (including late registration), for young men born in 1960 was 91.4 percent; for young men born in 1961, 94.2 percent; and for young men born in 1962, 87.4 percent.

Initially, 87 percent of the young men born in 1960 and 1961 registered during the 2-week registration period in July 1980, and 77 percent of the young men born in 1962 registered during the 1-week registration period in January 1981.

Selective Service reports, as of December 20, 1981, show that, despite higher compliance rates than the rates for young men born in 1963, about 545,000 of the 6 million population base for the young men born during 1960 through 1962 still have not registered. In total, then, of the 7.5 million youths required to register in 1980 and through October of 1981, about 1 million have failed to do so. This number will be reduced somewhat, however, due to late registrations among the young men born in 1963.

We analyzed registration compliance by birth month of the registrants and found that young men born in January and February 1963 had the highest rate of registration and that the rate was progressively lower for each succeeding birth month. The registration rates ranged from 76 percent of January and February births to 57 percent of September births. The highest registration rate (76 percent) is still well below the rates achieved in previous years.

The number of available months to register late has a direct impact on the computed compliance rates. For example, about 59,000 young men born in January 1963 registered 30 or more days after their birthday, whereas only 18,600 young men born in September 1963 registered 30 or more days after their birthday. However, this analysis was based on Selective Service's registration reports as of December 20, 1981, and therefore contained information that was generally only complete for persons registering during the first 10 months of the year. Thus, when complete information on 1981 registration is totaled by the Service, compliance rates for the later birth months may increase significantly.

Many late registrations resulted from the President's January 7, 1982, announcement that draft registration will be continued indefinitely and that nonregistrants would be given a 2-month grace period to the end of February 1982 before actions to prosecute begin. The Selective Service has announced that more than 400,000 late registrations occurred during the grace

period; however, the individual year group compliance rates have not been determined because the registration forms had not been completely processed as of mid-March 1982.

Other than the issue of registration completeness, we did not find any major problems with the manner in which the 1981 continuous registration was organized and conducted. Concerning accuracy, the Selective Service's estimate of 2.02 million as the universe of 18-year-old males that should have registered in 1981 was reasonable, and the inventory of 1.2 million registration cards recorded on computer files, as of December 20, 1981, was correct.

In reviewing the sample data, however, we noted some deficiencies in (1) keypunching (transposed numbers, misspelled names, etc.) and (2) Postal Service operations. The total errors we found, projected to the entire inventory, represent about 6 percent of the registrants whose cards were on computer files as of August 30, 1981. We believe the number of errors could be reduced further if local postal employees exercised more scrutiny in reviewing registration cards with the registrants, in clarifying illegible data, and also in comparing card data with that shown on the registrants' identification. These findings closely parallel those contained in our December 19, 1980, report.

We found that most of the data regarding names, addresses, dates of birth, and social security numbers on the registration cards and in the data processing system was correct. Of the inventory of registration cards on computer files as of August 30, 1981, we estimate that:

- No cards had obviously fictitious registrant names (Mickey Mouse, Donald Duck, etc.), and 1.7 percent had misspelled names.
- No cards had obviously fictitious registrant addresses (Earth, White House, etc.), and 0.9 percent of the cards had inaccurate addresses (of those which were inaccurate, one-third involved the street and two-thirds the zip code).
- 1.7 percent of the cards had date-of-birth errors.
- 2 percent of the cards had errors in social security numbers.

In almost all cases, the individual (1) registered personally at a local post office, (2) was an 18-year-old male who was required to register, and (3) was not in the Armed Forces at the time of registration.

Overall, the Postal Service performed tasks in accordance with prescribed procedures. In most cases, registrants obtained blank registration cards at the post office from a self-service counter or from an employee and returned the completed registration card to a postal employee directly. About 25 percent of the registrants, however, told us that postal employees did not ask them for identification, which would verify information on the registration card.

The Selective Service followup procedures to verify data accuracy were generally effective. In most cases, registrants received a registration acknowledgement letter from the Selective Service, and the information in the letter was correct. Details of our findings are presented in appendix I.

CONCLUSIONS

Compared to the time-limited registrations conducted in 1980 and early 1981, the 1981 continuous registration program is just as accurate but much less complete. Unless the higher rate of registration resulting from the surge of late registrations during January and February is sustained during 1982, alternatives for achieving improved compliance will have to be developed.

One alternative is a return to the time-limited registration program which has had proven success. The results of the two time-limited programs indicate that the Selective Service can, perhaps, more effectively apprise youths of the registration requirement through a more intensive advertising campaign than is possible with current funding for advertising throughout the year.

We recognize, however, that lack of knowledge about the registration requirement is only one of several possible causes of the substantial deterioration in registration compliance. Other possible reasons are that the nonregistrants: (1) believed the President would abolish draft registration, (2) thought they would not get caught, (3) saw older peers who were not required to register and were resentful, (4) knew others who had not registered and were not penalized, and (5) planned to register only if the country were threatened. Selective Service officials suggested the following alternatives that could also be considered for raising compliance: (1) improving Selective Service's public affairs program by adding paid advertising to existing free public service advertising and performing targeted marketing, (2) increasing the number of registration locations by adding high schools, Federal employment offices, and private sector personnel offices, (3) registering people through the use of existing Government computer files, (4) registering only those in the prime age zone (i.e., 19 and 20) either with continuous or one-time registration, and (5) increasing the enforcement effort using names and addresses in Social Security Administration and Internal Revenue Service computer files.

AGENCY COMMENTS

The Selective Service agreed with our findings and was pleased that the Service's registration process continued to achieve a high degree of accuracy. However, the Selective Service shared our concerns about the deterioration in registration compliance.

The Selective Service agreed that, if compliance does not improve significantly in 1982, alternatives for raising compliance will have to be developed. The Selective Service pointed to several specific alternatives that could be considered besides the return to the time-limited registration proposed in our draft report. We generally agree with the alternatives suggested and have included them in this report.

Concerning the compliance rate for the 1981 registration, the Selective Service said that final figures are not yet available because of a large backlog of late registrations that have not been processed. As suggested by the Selective Service, we added a section to the report explaining that the 70-percent registration compliance rate we computed covered a different time frame and was based on a different technique than the 77-percent compliance rate publicly announced by Selective Service in November 1981.

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We are sending copies of this report to the Secretary of Defense; the Director, Selective Service System; the Director, Office of Management and Budget; and other interested persons.


Clifford I. Gould
Director

EVALUATION OF THE SELECTIVE SERVICE SYSTEM'S1981 CONTINUOUS REGISTRATIONREGISTRATION RESULTS

The Selective Service reports accurately state the extent of registration by young men born in 1963. However, over 450,000 young men have failed to register. Only about 1.06 million, or 70 percent, of the 1.51 million young men who should have registered during the first 9 months of 1981 had registered and were recorded on the Selective Service's master computer files as of December 20, 1981. Complete results of the 1981 continuous registration were not known as of mid-March 1982. This lag is caused by men registering an average of 22 days after their 18th birthday, most post offices forwarding completed forms only once every 4 weeks, and Selective Service data entry and tabulation taking some additional weeks.

Monthly registrations

The continuous registration of men born in 1963 began in January 1981. Young men are now required to register with the Selective Service at their local post office within 30 days of their 18th birthday. To determine the completeness of the registration program, we analyzed registration compliance by birth month of the registrants.

Young men born in January and February 1963 had the highest rate of registration, and the rate was progressively lower for each succeeding birth month. The registration rates ranged from 76 percent of January and February births to 57 percent of September births. We believe that the number of available months to register late has a direct impact on the computed compliance rates. For example, about 59,000 young men born in January 1963 registered 30 or more days after their birthday, whereas only 18,600 young men born in September 1963 registered 30 or more days after their birthday.

However, this analysis was based on the Selective Service's registration reports as of December 20, 1981, and therefore contained information that was generally only complete through October 1981. Thus, when complete information on 1981 registrations is recorded by the Selective Service, compliance rates for the later birth months may increase significantly.

The results of our analysis of registrants' compliance by birth month follows.

<u>Month</u>	<u>1963 births</u>	<u>1981 registrations</u>	<u>Percent of births registered</u>
	- - - - - (000 omitted) - - - - -		
Jan.	167	127	76
Feb.	153	116	76
Mar.	168	126	75
Apr.	159	117	74
May	165	119	72
June	164	116	71
July	177	120	68
Aug.	181	116	64
Sept.	<u>180</u>	<u>102</u>	<u>57</u>
Total	<u>1,514</u>	<u>1,059</u>	70

The Selective Service announced a 77-percent compliance rate in early November 1981 covering a different time frame and based on a different technique. Its estimate was based on raw data not broken out by birth month and included a backlog of 245,000 registrations being processed but not yet posted to the master file. In calculating the compliance rate, the Selective Service assumed that the entire backlog was associated with men born during the first 8 months of 1963. Accordingly, the compliance rate would be overstated to the extent that the backlog consisted of registrants born after August 31, 1963. (Subsequent reports show that about 72,000 of the backlogged registrants were born after August 31, 1963.) Our compliance rate estimates excluded a backlog of about 102,000 registrations awaiting processing as of December 20, 1981. We excluded the backlog because no effective means was available at that time to estimate what portion of the backlog represented persons born during the first 9 months of 1963.

Calculation of registrant universe

The Selective Service estimate of the registrant population size of 2.02 million is reasonable although there were some deficiencies in the data used. The Service's estimate of the population size was based on 1980 population statistics published by the Bureau of Census, Department of Commerce, and reduced by 25,000 institutionalized males and 84,000 males in the Armed Forces. Census information the Service used did not account for the population of the U.S. territories and possessions. We estimated the population of registration-age males in Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, and Guam at about 30,000 which, when added to the Service's estimate, would increase the total universe to about 2.05 million.

Our estimate, as with any estimate, involves some assumptions because of data limitations and/or nonavailability. The additional increase of registrants from our estimate is not particularly

significant in that it would slightly decrease any reported registration compliance rate by about 1.5 percentage points. Including young men from all affected areas will, we believe, produce a more accurate estimate of registrant population size.

Number of registration cards in inventory

To test the accuracy of the 1981 continuous registration, we sampled registration cards on file with the Selective Service. We counted cards and verified numbers of registrants contained in the Service's reports with numbers contained in control documents and reviewed the cards for obvious fictitious names and/or erroneous addresses (such as Mickey Mouse, Donald Duck, Earth, White House, etc.). Our count agreed in all instances with that shown on the control documents. Also, no cards had obviously fictitious names or erroneous addresses. The number of cards on file with the Service as of August 30, 1981 (we made our tests in early Sept.) was about 453,000. This agreed with the numbers reported by the Service. See appendix II for a further discussion of our methodology.

Although we sampled all cards on file as of August 30, 1981, the inventory of young men born in 1963 and of those registered at that time generally represented only those young men born during January through May. This is partially due to the lag which occurs between the date a young man turns 18 and the date his registration information is recorded in the Service's computer files.

As of December 20, 1981, the Service had about 1.2 million cards recorded on its computer files. This generally represents those young men born during January through September of 1963.

ACCURACY OF THE REGISTRATION DATA

To test the accuracy of the registration data, we sampled 503 registration cards on computer files with the Selective Service. We talked, by telephone, with 347 of the sampled registrants and found that most of the data regarding names, addresses, dates of birth, and social security numbers on the registration cards and in the Service's data processing system was accurate. The total errors, projected to the entire inventory, represent about 6 percent of the registrants whose cards were on file as of August 30, 1981.

The name errors were all the result of misspelling (by one letter) the last name of the registrant because of illegible writing on the registration card. Had local postal employees carefully reviewed the cards with the registrant and clarified the illegible data, fewer errors would have been made.

The address errors consisted of one missing number of a street, one omitted zip code, and one illegible zip code erroneously keypunched. However, 14 registrants provided us with different street addresses than those recorded on their registration cards and Selective Service records. These registrants said they had not moved but, rather, the information provided to us was a different way of reporting the same street address, for example, box number versus rural route number. Eight additional registrants provided us with completely different address (street, city, and zip code) information. We believe these differences are due to subsequent changes of address rather than to deficiencies in initially recording registration information. We now have another review underway to determine the degree to which address changes are reported by registrants to the Selective Service.

Date-of-birth errors consisted of one clearly printed record in which the day was keypunched incorrectly, three clearly printed records in which the registrant apparently provided an erroneous day of birth, and two illegible records in which the registrant used a number rather than the required three-letter abbreviation for the birth month. Some of these type errors could have been avoided had local postal employees carefully compared the information written on the registration card with identification supplied by the registrant.

Social security number errors consisted of seven registration records generally containing one or two digits incorrectly recorded on the Selective Service's computer files. The space containing the social security numbers on the completed cards had been blacked out to protect the privacy of the registrants. Thus, we could not determine if illegible numbers were the reason for the errors. Also, 15 of our sampled registrants did not report a number to the Selective Service.

It should be noted that a U.S. district court ruled in 1980 that using social security numbers violated the Privacy Act and prohibited the Selective Service from requiring registrants to report social security numbers. However, a stay of the district court's order was granted by a district court of appeals. Amendments in 1981 to the Military Selective Service Act now permit the Service to require registrants to report social security numbers.

The results of our inquiry into the accuracy of the registration data follow. Our projections are subject to a maximum sampling error of about plus or minus 2 percent within a 95-percent confidence level. To the extent that there are large error rates in the portion of the sample we were unable to contact, the conclusions we reach, of course, would be different.

<u>Issue</u>	<u>No. in sample</u>	<u>Percent of those responding</u>	<u>Projected no. in universe (note a)</u>
Name:			
Correct name	340	98.3	306,200
Misspelled name	<u>6</u>	<u>1.7</u>	<u>5,400</u>
	346	<u>100.0</u>	311,600
Did not answer	<u>1</u>		<u>900</u>
	<u>347</u>		<u>312,500</u>
Address:			
Correct address	342	99.1	308,000
Inaccurate street	1	0.3	900
Inaccurate zip code	<u>2</u>	<u>0.6</u>	<u>1,800</u>
	345	<u>100.0</u>	310,700
Did not answer	<u>2</u>		<u>1,800</u>
	<u>347</u>		<u>312,500</u>
Date of birth:			
Correct birth date	340	98.3	306,200
Incorrect birth date	<u>6</u>	<u>1.7</u>	<u>5,400</u>
	346	<u>100.0</u>	311,600
Did not answer	<u>1</u>		<u>900</u>
	<u>347</u>		<u>312,500</u>
Social security number:			
Correct number	325	93.7	292,700
Incorrect number	7	2.0	6,300
None recorded	<u>15</u>	<u>4.3</u>	<u>13,500</u>
	<u>347</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>312,500</u>

a/See app. II for a discussion on our methodology used to project numbers in this table as well as those in the tables that follow.

WHO REGISTERED AND HOW

We found, in almost all cases, that (1) the individual did register personally at a local post office with the Selective Service, (2) the person was an 18-year-old male who was required to register, and (3) the individual was not in the Armed Forces at the time of registration. In the excepted cases, three registration cards were filled out by a relative, one registration card was filled out by a friend, and two young men were in the Armed Forces at the time of registration.

The results of our inquiry into who registered and how follow.

<u>Issue</u>	<u>No. in sample</u>	<u>Percent of those responding</u>	<u>Projected no. in universe</u>
How registered:			
Registered self	338	98.8	304,400
Registered by someone else	<u>4</u>	<u>1.2</u>	<u>3,600</u>
	342	<u>100.0</u>	308,000
Did not answer	<u>5</u>		<u>4,500</u>
	<u>347</u>		<u>312,500</u>
Sex:			
Males	347	100.0	312,500
Females	<u>0</u>	<u>0.0</u>	<u>0</u>
	<u>347</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>312,500</u>
Age:			
18 years	346	<u>100.0</u>	311,600
Did not answer	<u>1</u>		<u>900</u>
	<u>347</u>		<u>312,500</u>
In Armed Forces at time of registration:			
No	345	99.4	310,700
Yes	<u>2</u>	<u>0.6</u>	<u>1,800</u>
	<u>347</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>312,500</u>

REGISTRATION SYSTEM AND OPERATIONS

Overall, the Postal Service and the Selective Service performed tasks in accordance with prescribed procedures. The system developed and used to conduct registration generally consisted of the following:

- The U.S. Postal Service provides the personnel and locations for the registration. Postal clerks at about 34,000 post offices are involved in the registration process.
- The Selective Service trained post office headquarters officials who, in turn, were responsible for the training of local post office employees.
- Persons having to register report to the post office, pick up the registration card, complete it, and return it to the postal employees.
- The postal employee attempts to verify the information written on the registration card with registrants' identification information. If an identification is not available, the card is noted as such and accepted because of the need to register all young males within 30 days of their 18th birthday.
- Postal employees stamp, initial, and mail the completed cards to the Selective Service computer center.
- The Selective Service computer center receives, sorts, numbers, and edits the registration cards and keypunches the information on computer tape.
- The Selective Service maintains control over the registration cards and makes internal checks as to the authenticity of the registration and accuracy of key registration information. It also provides each registrant with a letter acknowledging his registration and requests information concerning changes in the originally provided data.

Postal Service operations

The Postal Service performed several tasks during the registration process, including maintaining, controlling, and providing cards to registrants; reviewing the cards for completeness; and verifying certain data against a presented form of identification. We asked registrants to recall what procedures they followed at the post offices and to verify their place of registration. These questions were asked to evaluate the manner in which the procedures were followed.

Overall, the Postal Service performed tasks in accordance with prescribed procedures. In most cases, registrants obtained blank registration cards at the post office from a self-service counter or from an employee and returned the completed registration card to a postal employee directly. About 7 percent of the registrants, however, left the completed card on the counter, mailed it in, or returned the card to someone other than directly to a postal employee. Thus, postal employees were unable to request identification to verify the data registrants provided. In addition, about 25 percent of the registrants who did return completed registration cards directly to a postal employee told us that postal employees did not ask them for identification which could be checked. The results of our questions follow.

<u>Issue</u>	<u>No. in sample</u>	<u>Percent of those responding</u>	<u>Projected no. in universe</u>
Blank registration card was obtained from:			
Post office	328	97.0	295,400
Someone else other than the registrant	6	1.8	5,400
Mail delivery	3	0.9	2,700
Courthouse	<u>1</u>	<u>0.3</u>	<u>900</u>
	338	<u>100.0</u>	304,400
Not applicable	<u>9</u>		<u>8,100</u>
	<u>347</u>		<u>312,500</u>
Completed registration card was:			
Returned to postal employee directly	313	92.6	281,900
Left on counter	13	3.8	11,700
Mailed in	9	2.7	8,100
Don't remember	<u>3</u>	<u>0.9</u>	<u>2,700</u>
	338	<u>100.0</u>	304,400
Not applicable	<u>9</u>		<u>8,100</u>
	<u>347</u>		<u>312,500</u>

<u>Issue</u>	<u>No. in sample</u>	<u>Percent of those responding</u>	<u>Projected no. in universe</u>
Postal employee asked registrants for identification:			
Yes	211	67.4	190,000
No	80	25.6	72,100
Don't remember	<u>22</u>	<u>7.0</u>	<u>19,800</u>
	313	<u>100.0</u>	281,900
Not applicable	<u>34</u>		<u>30,600</u>
	<u>347</u>		<u>312,500</u>
Registrant showed an identification:			
Yes	212	67.7	190,900
No	76	24.3	68,500
Don't remember	<u>25</u>	<u>8.0</u>	<u>22,500</u>
	313	<u>100.0</u>	281,900
Not applicable	<u>34</u>		<u>30,600</u>
	<u>347</u>		<u>312,500</u>
Post office employee checked registrants' identification:			
Yes	210	88.6	189,100
No	5	2.1	4,500
Don't remember	<u>22</u>	<u>9.3</u>	<u>19,800</u>
	237	<u>100.0</u>	213,400
Not applicable	<u>110</u>		<u>99,100</u>
	<u>347</u>		<u>312,500</u>

Selective Service followup procedures

The Selective Service followup procedures for verifying data accuracy were generally effective. In most cases, registrants received a registration acknowledgement letter from the Selective Service, and the information in the letter was correct. Although one-fifth of the randomly selected registrants told us that they had not received an acknowledgement letter, Selective Service records show that, at the time those interviews were conducted, each respondent had been mailed an acknowledgement letter and that only 1.5 percent were undeliverable. The results of our inquiry follow.

<u>Issue</u>	<u>No. in sample</u>	<u>Percent of those responding</u>	<u>Projected no. in universe</u>
Registrant received an acknowledgement letter from the Selective Service:			
Yes	258	74.3	232,300
No	70	20.2	63,100
Don't remember	<u>19</u>	<u>5.5</u>	<u>17,100</u>
	<u>347</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>312,500</u>
Registration information in the letter was correct:			
Yes	236	91.5	212,500
No	13	5.0	11,700
Don't remember	<u>9</u>	<u>3.5</u>	<u>8,100</u>
Not applicable	258	100.0	232,300
	<u>89</u>		<u>80,200</u>
	<u>347</u>		<u>312,500</u>

METHODOLOGY USED IN EVALUATING SELECTIVE SERVICE'S1981 CONTINUOUS REGISTRATION PROGRAM

We reviewed the system designed to conduct the registration and tested its procedures through statistical sampling of completed registration cards and data on them. Specifically, we sampled 503 registration cards from the 452,942 inventory of registration cards of males born in 1963 as of August 30, 1981, using statistical sampling techniques. We obtained computer printouts of the data on these cards from the Selective Service computer tapes. We then interviewed the registrants, by telephone, through the use of a standard questionnaire, and compared the questionnaire results with data on system files.

We were able to directly contact 347, or 69.0 percent, of the 503 sampled registrants. These registrants provided information pertaining to their identity and their registration with the Selective Service. To test the accuracy of the registration data, we compared information provided to us by registrants regarding sex, names, addresses, dates of birth, and social security numbers with information on registration cards and in computer files of the Selective Service. We asked registrants to recall what procedures they followed at the post offices and to verify their place of registration. These questions were asked to evaluate the manner in which post office and Selective Service procedures were followed.

We were unable to contact 26 registrants because they had no telephones and 130 registrants who were not available when we called. However, we did speak with either a relative, a friend, or a roommate of 31 of these registrants who acknowledged knowing the individual we were attempting to call. We made at least 5 attempts to get in touch with the remaining 99 registrants. Thus, we could identify, with a degree of certainty, 378 registrants. We did not attempt to verify information about the registrant with the relative, friend, or roommate because of unknowns and uncertainties associated with secondhand information. Our data results pertain to the information concerning 347 registrants that we could contact.

Using a 95-percent confidence level, we projected our telephone interview results to a universe of 312,500. Projections regarding the accuracy of the registration data and who registered and how are subject to a maximum sampling error of about plus or minus 2 percent. Projections regarding the registration system and operations are subject to a maximum sampling error of plus or minus 5 percent. The universe of 312,500 was determined by applying the same ratio, 69 percent, that our telephone response (347 of 503) represented to the total 452,942 universe, as of August 30, 1981. To the extent that there are large error

rates in the portion of the sample we were unable to contact, the conclusions we reach, of course, would be different. The results of our telephone calls are discussed in appendix I.

To determine the completeness of the registration, we reviewed the Service's reports of registration and tested their accuracy by randomly sampling the 452,942 registration cards of young men born in 1963 on file with the Selective Service as of August 30, 1981. We counted cards and verified numbers contained in the Service's reports with those in control documents and reviewed cards for obvious fictitious names and/or erroneous addresses.

Selective Service procedures call for completed registration cards to be sequentially numbered and grouped into blocks of 100. The Selective Service maintained control documents which showed the total cards in each block and the cumulative number of cards. To verify the block count, we counted cards in randomly selected blocks and matched our count against the System's control documents.

We also assessed the accuracy of the Service's estimate of the registrant population size. We compared 1980 population statistics published by the Bureau of Census with the Selective Service estimates.



UNITED STATES GENERAL ACCOUNTING OFFICE
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20548

FEDERAL PERSONNEL AND
COMPENSATION DIVISION

B-201499

December 19, 1980

The Honorable William Proxmire
Chairman, Subcommittee on HUD
and Independent Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate

The Honorable Sam Nunn
Chairman, Subcommittee on
Manpower and Personnel
Committee on Armed Services
United States Senate

The Honorable Edward P. Boland
Chairman, Subcommittee on HUD
and Independent Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
House of Representatives

The Honorable Richard C. White
Chairman, Subcommittee on Military
Personnel
Committee on Armed Services
House of Representatives

Subject: Evaluation of the Recent Draft
Registration (FPCD-81-30)

The completeness and accuracy of the recent draft registration conducted by the Selective Service System has been subject to challenge by a variety of critics and organizations. This issue has been compounded by court actions on the registration of women and the questioned use of social security numbers in the registration process. Collectively, these developments have raised a serious question concerning the use of the registration program in a national emergency. This question is made even more critical because of the commitment to register yet additional youths beginning in January.

B-201499

For these reasons, we evaluated the registration program and related issues, and because of the responsibilities of your Committee with respect to the Selective Service System, we believe that our findings will be of interest to you.

OBJECTIVE, SCOPE, AND METHODOLOGY

The objective of this review was to test the accuracy and completeness of the registration program. We worked at the Selective Service System headquarters in Washington, D.C. We reviewed the system designed to conduct the registration and tested its procedures through statistical sampling of completed registration cards and data on them. Specifically, we sampled about 400 registration cards, using valid statistical sampling techniques. We reviewed data on these cards and compared them against Selective Service System computer tapes. In addition, we interviewed, by phone, 309 of our sampled registrants and compared our results with data on System files. We also assessed the accuracy of the System's registration card count by randomly selecting blocks of cards, counting them, and comparing our count against their records. (Details of our findings and a description of our statistical testing and methodology are explained in enclosure II.)

DRAFT REGISTRATION IS COMPLETE AND ACCURATE

Overall, we did not find any major problems with the manner in which registration was organized or conducted. In reviewing the sample data, however, we noted some errors, as well as some discrepancies, in keypunching (transposed address numbers, misspelled names, etc.), postal service operations, and followup procedures to verify data accuracy. In total, however, these errors did not significantly affect the registration program.

Concerning the accuracy and completeness of the registration program, we found that:

- The Selective Service System's estimate of 3.8 million as the universe of 18- and 19-year-old males that should have registered was reasonable.
- The inventory of registration cards closely approximated the 3.6 million the Selective Service System had publicly announced.

B-201499

--Most of the data regarding names, addresses, dates of birth, and social security numbers on the registration cards and in the data processing system was accurate. The total errors we found, projected to the entire inventory, represent about 5 percent of the registrants, and they were predominantly caused by illegible registration data on the cards. Within the more than 3 million registration inventory, we estimated that only

--459 cards had obviously fictitious registrant names (Ronald Reagan, Jimmy Carter, etc.), another 9,000 had nonverifiable names, and another 36,000 had misspelled names;

--459 cards had obviously fictitious registrant addresses (Earth, White House, etc.), and another 81,000 had inaccurate addresses (33 percent zip code and 67 percent city/street);

--27,000 cards had date-of-birth errors which were due to inaccurate coding; and

--18,000 cards had errors in social security numbers.

Further, while these errors represent a significant number of registrants, the System corrected or was in the process of correcting most of them. Eliminating all the errors, however, is unrealistic although final accuracy levels of 98 percent do not appear to be unreasonable expectations.

Recent actions by the U.S. Supreme Court and a U.S. District Court on the questions of the constitutionality of limiting the registration process to men and the use of social security numbers in the registration process also merited our evaluation.

If the Supreme Court decides that women also must be registered, the System would have no problem in doing so. Current forms provide for identification of sex, and this data could be readily processed by the System's computers. If additional youths were registered, however, there would be added costs, estimated by the System to be about \$2 a person. Thus, if the System registered about 3.6 million women, costs would exceed \$7 million.

B-201499

The U.S. District Court's November 14, 1980, decision that the System's use of Social Security numbers violates the Privacy Act portends greater problems for the System. If finally sustained through all legal reviews, the prohibition against requiring social security numbers would remove one of the System's internal data verification controls. Unless a final court decision is made quickly, it appears that the System will have the time to develop adequate alternative controls or to obtain legislative approval to use social security numbers in its registration efforts.

CONCLUSIONS

We believe the Selective Service System has made significant progress in designing an effective registration program and correcting the numerous shortcomings we have disclosed in our prior reports. (See enc. I.) We were particularly pleased to note the coordination achieved by an integrated labor force (other Government agencies, contractors, and Selective Service employees) and sophisticated planning methods to accomplish the registration program. We were also pleased to observe the commitment of the System's personnel to the achievement of its goals.

- - - - -

We discussed our findings with the Director of the Selective Service System. He was pleased with the advancements the System has made since registration and agreed that our prior reports were accurate in pointing out that the previous postmobilization registration plans would not have met the Department of Defense's manpower needs.

We are sending copies of this report to the Secretary of Defense; the Director, Selective Service System; Director, Office of Management and Budget; and other interested parties.

Sincerely yours,



H. L. Krieger
Director

Enclosures

**List of Prior Reports on
the Selective Service System**

1. "What Are the Capabilities of the Selective Service System?"
FPCD-79-4, December 14, 1978.
2. "Weaknesses In the Selective Service System's Emergency
Registration Plan" FPCD-79-89, August 29, 1979.
3. "Actions To Improve Parts of the Military Manpower
Mobilization System Are Underway" FPCD-80-58, July 22, 1980.

EVALUATION OF SELECTIVE SERVICE
SYSTEM'S REGISTRATION PROGRAM

REGISTRATION SYSTEM, SCOPE,
AND METHODOLOGY

The system developed and used to conduct registration generally consisted of the following:

- The U.S. Postal Service provided the personnel and locations for the registration. Postal clerks at about 34,000 post offices were involved in the registration process.
- The Selective Service System trained post office headquarters officials who in turn were responsible for the training of local post office employees.
- Persons having to register were to report to the post office, pick up the registration card, complete it, and return it to the postal official.
- The postal official was to seek an identification to verify the data written on the registration card. If an identification was not available, the card was to be noted as such and accepted because of the need to register all individuals in the required age groups.
- Postal officials were to stamp, initial, and mail the completed cards to one of 6 predetermined Internal Revenue Service processing centers.
- Internal Revenue Service processing centers were to receive, sort, number and edit the registration cards and keypunch the information on computer tape. The cards and tapes were to be forwarded to the Selective Service System.
- The Selective Service System was to maintain control over the registration cards and make internal checks as to the authenticity of the registrant and accuracy of key registration data. They also were to provide each registrant a letter acknowledging his registration and request information with regard to changes in the originally provided data.

CALCULATIONS OF
REGISTRANT UNIVERSE

The Selective Service System estimate of the registrant population size is reasonable although there were some deficiencies in the data used. The Selective Service System's estimate of the registrant population size was about 3.88 million 18-and 19-year old males. This estimate was based upon 1979 population statistics published by the Bureau of Census and reduced by a calculated number of institutionalized males and those in the Armed Forces. The following table indicates the numbers derived by the Selective Service System.

	<u>Year of birth</u>		
	<u>1960</u>	<u>1961</u>	<u>Total</u>
Estimated male population	2,160,000	2,150,000	4,310,000
Less:			
Institutionalized	30,000	30,000	60,000
Service members	<u>201,000</u>	<u>169,000</u>	<u>370,000</u>
Total	<u>1,929,000</u>	<u>1,951,000</u>	<u>3,880,000</u>

In evaluating the above calculations we found that the Bureau of Census population data used by the Selective Service System did not account for U.S. civilian citizens living abroad or the population of the U.S. territories and possessions. We estimated the population of these areas and determined the total universe to be about 3.98 million.

The difference between the Selective Service System's estimate and ours is about 96,000 registrants maximum but the difference should be less because of the population decline between 1979 and 1980 which we did not take into account.

As with our estimate, any estimate involves some assumption because of data limitations and/or nonavailability. Results obtained would vary depending on the assumptions made. The additional increase of 96,000 registrants from our estimate is not that significant in that it would slightly decrease the registrant compliance rate from 93 percent to 91 percent. We believe the system estimate was reasonable considering

there was only a slight difference in our estimate and that of the Selective Service System's. We believe, however, that when the 1980 census data is available, the System should update its calculation and include the population from all affected areas.

NUMBER OF REGISTRATION
CARDS IN INVENTORY

We sampled the registration cards on file with the Selective Service System to (1) count and verify numbers contained in Selective Service System's public statements against control documents and (2) review them for obvious fictitious names and/or erroneous addresses. We found our count agreed in all instances with that shown on the Selective Service Systems' control documents, except for one card with an obviously fictitious name and one card with an erroneous address.

Selective Service System procedures call for completed registration cards to be sequentially numbered and grouped into blocks of 100. The blocks were further grouped into batches of about 1,350 cards and boxed accordingly. There were about 2,700 boxes (37,715 blocks) on file with the Selective Service System in late September--the time we made our tests. The Selective Service System maintained control documents which showed the total cards in each block and the cumulative in each box. To verify the block count we counted cards in 82 blocks (7,846 cards) and matched our count against the System control documents. In all instances the System's count and our count agreed. Statistically our tests indicated that with a 95-percent confidence level, the number of cards on file with the Selective Service System is about 3.6 million and this agrees with the numbers published by the Selective Service System.

While counting the cards, we also reviewed them for obviously fictitious names and erroneous addresses. We found one card in each category. One card had the name Ronald Reagan, born 1907, and Republican Party as the address. The other card had Earth as the address. The cards were not found in the same block of 100 cards. Statistically this would indicate that there would be between 1 and 1,383 registration cards with obviously fictitious names and between 1 and 1,383 with obviously erroneous addresses among the 3.6 million cards. Considering that these errors were not on the same card there would be a maximum of about 2,766 cards (or .08%) with these kind of errors in the inventory.

SAMPLED REGISTRATIONS

We randomly sampled 406 registration cards to verify the information on them against the data transferred to Selective Service System computer tapes. We also interviewed registrants by phone. Our tests were to assess keypunching accuracy, identify procedural weaknesses, and verify the data with the actual registrant. For the most part we found the data on Selective Service System records was accurate. Most of the problems we found were caused by illegible data on the registration card and inaccurately recorded on the System's computer tapes. Most of these errors can be minimized by having local postal officials go over the cards with the registrant and reprint illegible data.

Generally, the Selective Service System designed an effective data processing system to control and maintain registration data. The methodology we employed to test data accuracy and internal procedures is described in the following sections.

METHODOLOGY

We determined that 369 of the 406 sampled registration cards had contained a complete telephone number. We were able to obtain telephone numbers for an additional 9 registrants through directory assistance, therefore, we could attempt to contact 378, or 93 percent, of the sampled registrants. Because of this high percentage we chose to interview registrants by phone to verify the information on the registration card, rather than use other data verification techniques. Also, we could test the internal control procedures to prevent erroneous data from entering the system after the actual date of registration. Also, telephoning the registrant provided a means for obtaining information quickly and consistently through the use of a standard questionnaire. Also, the 93 percent would represent about 3.4 of the 3.6 million registration cards in the inventory.

TELEPHONE INTERVIEW RESULTS

We were able to directly contact 309 of the 378 registrants. Each of these registrants provided information pertaining to their identity and their registration with

the Selective Service System. We also spoke with either a relative, friend, or roommate of an additional 37 registrants who acknowledged knowing the individual we were attempting to call. Thus, we could identify, with a degree of certainty, 347 registrants. We did not attempt to verify information about the registrant with relative, friend, or roommate because of unknowns and uncertainties associated with second hand information. Our data results pertain to the information concerning the 309 registrants that we could directly contact.

The issues we covered in our interview related to (1) the accuracy of the registration data on Selective Service System files, (2) who actually did the registering, (3) the sex of the registrant, (4) Armed Forces commitments, and (5) procedures followed by post office officials dealing with the registrant. The first issue results were shown on page 2. We used a 95 percent confidence level with a + or - 5 percent error factor. The following discusses the results of the remaining issues.

Who Registered, Sex of Registrant,
and Armed Forces Commitment

We found that in the majority of cases that (1) the individual did register personally with the Selective Service System, (2) the person indicated being of the male sex which was required to register, and (3) the individual was not in the Armed Forces at the time of registration. Five people indicated they were in the Armed Forces, but it should be noted that 18- and 19-year old individuals serving in the National Guard or Reserves were required to register. We did not determine whether these five were in this category. The following table indicates the results of our inquiries into these issues:

<u>Issue</u>	<u>No. in sample</u>	<u>Percent of those contacted</u>	<u>Projected No. in universe</u> (000 omitted)
(1) <u>How registered</u>			
Registered self	305	98.7	2,740
Registered by someone else	1	.3	8
Don't know how registered	3	1.0	28
(2) <u>Sex</u>			
Males	309	100	2,776
Females	0	0	
(3) <u>In Armed Forces at time of registration</u>			
Yes	5	1.6	44
No	304	98.4	2,731

The above statistics are projected against about 2.8 million of the 3.4 million registrants. The 3.4 million represents the universe of those on which we had telephone numbers and could attempt contacting.

Postal Service Operations

The Post Office performed several tasks during the registration process including maintaining, controlling, and providing cards to registrants; reviewing the cards for completeness; and verifying certain data against a presented form of identification. We asked each registrant to recall what procedures they followed at the post offices and to verify their place of registration. These questions were asked to evaluate

the manner in which the procedures were followed. Overall, the post office officials performed those tasks they were asked to do. The following table shows the results of our questioning and as in the preceding section is projected against the 2.8-million universe.

<u>Issue</u>	<u>No. in sample (note a)</u>	<u>Percent of those contacted</u>	<u>Projected no. in universe</u> (000 omitted)
At post office, the registra- tion card was obtained from			
Behind counter	165	53.3	1,479
Self service counter	130	42.1	1,169
Other	10	3.2	89
Completed registration card was:			
Returned to postal official directly	294	95.1	2,640
Left on counter	6	1.9	53
Mailed in	3	1.0	28
Other	2	.6	17

a/ Totals may not add to 309 because the registrant may not have been asked or may not have answered every question.

<u>Issue</u>	<u>No. in Sample (note a)</u>	<u>Percent of those contacted</u>	<u>Projected no. in universe (000 omitted)</u>
Postal official asked registrant to show identi- fication			
Yes	232	75.1	2,085
No	42	13.6	377
Don't remember	20	6.5	180
Registrant showed an identification			
Yes	230	74.4	2,065
No	51	16.5	458
Don't remember	13	4.2	117

a/ Totals may not add to 309 because the registrant may not have been asked or may not have answered every question.



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